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have been made in astronomical instruments, and who shall say that improvements may not still be made? It is somewhat tantalizing to be told that the stars are unquestionably like us—having the same material elements as are contained in our own bodies and in our own Earth, and yet to be in ignorance as to whether sentient and rational beings may inhabit them, and, if so, whether it be possible for us, with greater knowledge, to hold communication with them.

Professor Langley has not in this book cleared up the mystery of the sun's spots or of the sources of solar heat. His theory with regard to the latter is well known and is admirably stated and defended, namely, that the heat given out by the sun is caused by the gradual shrinkage or settlement of its gaseous substances toward its centre. A contraction of three hundred feet a year would, he states, be more than enough to cause it to give forth all the immense flow of heat we now see, and yet would make so slight a difference in the apparent size of the sun that it could scarcely be noticeable through the most powerful telescope. If this shrinkage is going on at the rate and for the purpose here stated, it is satisfactory to be assured that it will take from five to ten millions of years for it to become solid and cold; for in that case all life on the earth must soon cease to be. Whether there be any way by which the vast quantities of heat radiating in all directions from the sun may be returned to it, is an admittedly open question, but Professor Langley quotes Professor Young on this point to the effect that all analogies in nature, so far, seem to point to the law of a beginning and an end, and that "the present order of things seems to be bounded both in the past and in the future by terminal catastrophes which are veiled in clouds as yet inscrutable." Our author makes all allowance for the falling in of meteors into the sun as a probable supply of heat, but argues that the main origin of the heat is the contraction of the sun's substance, and that, from all data obtainable, the sun's life is covered by about thirty millions of years, of which four or five millions, or possibly as many as ten millions, may yet be in the future, and then "the end will come."

### III.

#### BOOKS ON COLORADO.

COLORADO is so youthful a member of the happy and United family of States glorying in the Stars and Stripes, and is so closely connected in the thought of our people with interests and amusements anything but sedentary, that the appearance of books with the imprint of a Denver publishing house\* upon them naturally causes a little flutter of surprise. And yet when one counts the years and reflects upon the wonders of Western enterprise, the sober second thought comes in that, after all, this is just what might be expected. So much light and heat are radiating from these Eastern centres that, if some of it does not come back to us in the shape of printed books, we may begin to fear that our condition of intellectual warmth and energy is due, as in the case of the sun, to a process of contraction only, and may some day cool off with more or less of a catastrophe to mark the end. Be this as it may, we welcome all indications from our sister cities of the Great West of the formation and growth, within and around them, of literary tastes and habits. The West is a great market for books, and is destined no doubt, to be a great producer, though at present, and for many years to come the tendency of life in a State like Colorado must naturally be somewhat opposed to the formation of any distinctively literary or author-producing class.

\*"Mountain Trails and Parks in Colorado." By L. B. France. Chain, Hardy & Co.

"Mountain Trails" is not a matter-of-fact descriptive work, but a journal of vacation travels and incidents. Such, at least, is its purport, and the author is evidently a man of healthful tastes and genial disposition, fully alive to the charms of mountain and sylvan solitude when these luxuries are shared by good companions and trusty friends. No one must read this book with the idea of getting facts and figures about Colorado, its mines and minerals, its population and resources. The author takes his gun and fishing rod and makes for the wilderness, here telling us what he saw and heard and did or failed to do, as a sportsman and tourist. Types of frontier character, sketches of life and scenery, tit-bits of adventure and experience, and a large amount of dialogue, in which the vernacular holds a prominent place, form the main characteristics of the book, which will be read with pleasure by all who have tasted frontier life or have friends roughing it, as well as by those who are fortifying themselves for the glorious excitement of a similar trip. The book is illustrated by a large number of sketches from nature.

The first glance at the title-page of "Letters from Colorado,"\* which, by the way, was forwarded to us by the Denver house of W. H. Lawrence & Co., though the book has the imprint of a Boston firm, would naturally lead one to expect a series of prose compositions, and we imagined ourselves about to be enlightened on many points of present interest as to the natural struggle for existence and supremacy in a young community. We were disappointed to find ourselves face to face with a volume of poetry, for our critical tastes are somewhat surfeited in that direction; but we soon discovered that even in the poetic dress the subject matter of the book claimed attention and awakened interest. Mrs. Wason, for we understand that the author is a lady, has chosen the poetic form of expression—a dangerous attempt, let us say—and has proved herself, if not a poet, a very bright and clever woman, with a quick observant faculty and the power of attractively describing what she sees and hears. The reader need not fear dullness or sentimentality—attributes very common to poetic people, and, of course, entitled to all due respect. No one capable of conceiving the idea of writing poetry can be otherwise than dull and sentimental at times, at least in the opinion of ordinary people, for the poetic mind is unfathomable—so Tennyson—and a great deal of poetry, or what passes for such, is either too high or too deep for comprehension. There is none of that kind of poetic excellence in this little book, but only the bright and rippling outflow of womanly ideas touching matters and things entering into the life of a wide-awake person in a new and strange country writing home to a college friend. And yet, despite a suspicious kind of horror at the mere suggestion of poetry, we must do the author the justice to say that there is some remarkably good descriptive poetry here. Every reader of Byron knows the fascination of a vigorous descriptive style in poetry, and there are many passages here which awaken that feeling.

Fate led me to a stately Spanish Don  
With two young daughters, brilliant as the sun,  
But full of Eve as are those impish creatures,  
Branded with all perfection in the features.  
Nature must mete her favors with some grace;  
Who gifts of wisdom have, show few of face.  
No leopard in the brake was slimmer, neater,  
Than she called commonly La Signorita.  
And, like a leopard, she had talons hid  
For such as failed to do her will when bid.

\*"Letters from Colorado." By H. L. Wason. Cupples & Hurd.

Here is a capital touch of Nature, descriptive of the experience of a person who has learned horsemanship in a riding school with a "bronco":

One used to riding very seldom halts,  
And without thinking in the saddle vaults,  
From force of habit touches with the spur,  
*Which trifling act is apt to make a stir.*

Then, too, the bronco never deigns to start  
Like well trained horses in the city mart.  
But makes an aimless lunge, describes a curve  
That shoots electric thrills thro' every nerve,  
Leaps wildly in the air, bound after bound,  
Ten feet, *often fifteen*, above the ground,  
Descending, with his tail spread on the breeze,  
An angle forms of forty-five degrees;  
Places his head between his stiff fore-legs  
Which, when he lights, are rigid as iron pegs;  
Plants all his feet together, lifts his back,  
And you beyond it with a spiteful thwack;  
Suddenly changing from his line of base,  
Leaves you suspended, wildly clutching space  
'Till gravitation kindly aids your case.

In such catastrophes a sufferer knows  
How little sympathy his audience shows.

A somewhat similar scene is sketched in prose by Mr. France in "Mountain Trails:"

"Stepping up to *Breckenridge*, I put my foot into the stirrup and swung myself upon his back, my right leg, in the orthodox method, hugging down his off side, until my toe found its place. This took, perhaps, two seconds; then I wished I had waited until next day, or some other time a long way off. In my seat I was less than five feet from the ground. I felt something swell and rise under me, the five feet lengthened to ten; then, I thought, to twenty. When I came down to the original five my head seemed to be sinking a prospect hole and had got somewhere in the region of my stomach, while my toes, also doing development work, but in the opposite direction, were tunneling my legs. I felt about half an inch high and five feet ten inches in circumference. Being in good condition to roll off, I thought I would; but before I could give the intention shape, I felt the swell again, and the ground was further away than ever. . . . About the time *Breckenridge* struck ground again, I dreamed I was standing on my head somewhere on the side of Mount Bross, the doctor was upside down with the fence on top of him, the Grande was flowing towards its source, and *Breckenridge* was walking off with his feet in the air."

Mrs. Wason, in her "Letters," disguises her individuality and the reader supposes that the author is a being of the sterner sex writing letters to a college friend who publishes them without permission, and, of course, without the author's revision. The style is therefore unconventional and colloquial, and if there is no sentimentality there are bits of true sentiment among the simpler descriptive pieces:

Who leaves a world behind him  
To seek a restful land,  
Will find a poet's haven  
Beside the Rio Grande.  
His heart will throb exultant,  
All carking care repressed,  
When he can hear the river  
Chanting a hymn of rest.

Here is a little of the true Western grit :

You smile; but Western life is earnest, real.  
 We need a creed we can apply and feel ;  
 . . . . . Our rugged life  
 Is a continuous war, a savage strife  
 To grasp requirements for our daily needs.  
 We find sparse time to jangle over creeds,  
 And blest is he to whom one God remains ;  
 Who from his soul can say " Jehovah reigns,"  
 When he has wrenched away those early chains.

It would be easy to go on quoting from this charming little book, which, if not altogether poetic according to the conventional standard, is full of the spirit of poetry, lightened by a vein of quiet humor, and possessing the added grace of a simple fidelity to nature in the descriptive passages, which will at once commend it and give it permanent interest to those familiar with the scenes described.

#### IV.

##### SLAV OR SAXON.

THE average reader may be inclined to dissent from the general proposition of Mr. Foulke's new work\* on Russia, viz., that a great struggle for supremacy is imminent between England and Russia, despite the positive opinion of so good an authority as Mr. Gladstone, which introduces the book. A careful consideration of the status of the European powers leads Mr. Foulke to the conclusion that only the two named have a future. An immense country, occupying one-sixth of the land on the earth's surface, with her possessions constantly increasing by conquest and colonization ; with such inexhaustible resources, agricultural and mineral, that, were every nation closed against her, she would be less conscious of loss than any country in the world ; with a hardy, patient, vigorous people trained to endurance, a territory so situated that maritime powers could scarcely reach her, and an army larger than any other in the world ; with a climate so severe that foreigners cannot long endure its rigors ; with a lack of populous centres, making a lasting conquest of the country almost impossible, Russia certainly presents a formidable front to any hostile nation.

The hundred millions of people to-day subject to the Czar consists of about eighty different races, speaking nearly all languages, and of many religions and pursuits. The native Russian is impelled by many circumstances of his nature and surroundings to emigrate. We quote from Rambaud : " The mountain keeps her own, the mountain calls her wanderer to return ; while the steppe, stretching away to the dimmest horizon, invited you to advance, to ride at a venture, to go where the eyes glance. The flat and monotonous soil has no hold on its inhabitants ; they will find as bare a landscape anywhere. As for their hovel, how can they care for that, it is burned down so often ? "

Mr. Foulke's conclusions concerning the military autocracy do not seem to us fully warranted by the facts. True, on the accession of Anna Ivanovna, an attempt to limit the authority of the sovereign was opposed by the masses, but the terrible record of the intervening years has left its traces even on the Russian peasantry, and it may fairly be questioned whether a similar attempt to-day would be unsuccessful.

The ambitious attempts of Russia to enlarge her boundaries have been on the

\* " Slav or Saxon." By Wm. D. Foulke, A.M. Questions of the Day Series. No. XLIII. G. P. Putnam's Sons.